NATO Chronicle:
New World Disorder

By K O R I N. S C H A K E

NATO institutions and practices were created to defend against a large-scale, short-warning attack by the Warsaw Pact. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War, Germany was reunited, the Warsaw Pact dismantled, and the Soviet Union dissolved into the Commonwealth of Independent States. Amidst such rapid and dramatic change, it is not surprising that some questioned the need to preserve NATO. What is striking is that as the Alliance enters its second half-century in this very different security environment, it is adapting to meet new challenges while retaining key elements that have defined it: consensus decisionmaking, integrated military command, and commitment to a common defense. It has expanded its missions to include projecting stability across the whole of Europe and adapted its structures to facilitate new members and a stronger European identity. This resilient transatlantic commitment of nations with shared interests and values was the vision of the founders of the North Atlantic Alliance.

New Missions

The initial survival of NATO at the end of the Cold War is attributable to a basic agreement among Europeans and North Americans that even without a Soviet threat, the residual insurance of continuing U.S. involvement was desirable at least for a transition period until Russian reform was well along. Europeans would thus feel more comfortable with the role of a unified Germany, and institutions such as the European Community, Western European Union (WEU), and Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) could be strengthened. The United States wanted to remain a European power. Europe continued to constitute a vital group of allies, a major economic market, and an ongoing security interest. The United States also had a practical interest in retaining the

the Strategic Concept approved in 1991 identified significant risk from instability

advantages of forward stationed U.S. forces and interoperable European militaries for contingencies that might arise in Europe or beyond.

NATO always served purposes other than simply deterring and defending against a Soviet attack. It ensured American participation in Europe, provided a framework for Europeans to grow comfortable with a strong Germany, reduced defense requirements for individual member nations, and established patterns of transparency and cooperation in defense planning that built confidence within the Alliance. However, even these added missions were difficult to justify when the public perception was directed at a quickly receding Soviet threat. Other purposes would be required.

At the London Summit in 1990, NATO identified a new mission: outreach to and dialogue with former adversaries. It established extensive diplomatic initiatives and exchange programs. Its senior leaders fostered military-to-military contacts to build confidence and a sense of commonality, helped professionalize former Warsaw Pact militaries and subordinate them to civilian control, and offered a way for the NATO military structure to engage beyond Alliance territory to shape the security environment. While continuing to advocate a common defense, the stationing of American troops in Europe, and both nuclear and conventional forces (but with reduced reliance on nuclear forces), the London Summit also directed a review of strategy, command architecture, and force structure.

The new strategy resulted in a broader mission: extending stability throughout Europe both by engagement and projecting military power. The Strategic Concept approved in 1991 identified the new European security environment as one of reduced threat of calculated aggression, but with significant risk from instability. This justified moving away from large forces intended principally for defense in place and toward smaller and more agile forces that can be deployed throughout and beyond the NATO area in response to emerging crises.

The concept of projecting stability was short of political approval for out-of-area operations but provided a critical first step in that direction. NATO took another year to formally accept non-Article 5 collective defense missions for several reasons: France advocated Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and European Union (EU) predominance, Germany had not yet received

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the constitutional ruling to participate in missions outside its territory, several allies did not want to appear to be rushing in where the Soviets had retreated, and wars in the former Yugoslavia were not yet dominating European security issues.

Internal Adaptation

Projecting stability required adapting NATO structures internally and building relationships with nations outside the Alliance. Conditioning structures to project stability was more involved than preparing them for participation by former enemies. Implementing the strategy demanded the negotiation of a detailed translation of political guidelines into military priorities, improving capabilities, reducing force size, reapportioning a smaller number of command slots among members, and reconciling all these changes with the preservation of the integrated command structure.

The first and easiest change was reducing reliance on nuclear forces. The London Summit limited the use of such weapons to a matter of last resort. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), and the High Level Group of national political representatives determined that without the Warsaw Pact, allied short-range nuclear forces could be eliminated if the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty went into effect. In October 1991, before this strategy was formally approved, NATO defense ministers agreed to reduce the nuclear arsenal by 80 percent.

Adapting the integrated military command (IMC) proved more difficult. The first issue was determining whether peacetime military integration was needed in an environment of reduced threat and expanded warning times. The Alliance is unique among international organizations in having a standing peacetime military structure. Routine interaction among militaries in IMC enables forces to conduct a broad range of operations, from high-intensity combat to peacekeeping in a permissive environment. The Strategic Concept outlined elements of common defense that were vital to operational coherence: common operational planning; multinational formations; stationing forces on each other's territory;

General Ridgeway assuming post of SACEUR, 1952.

NATO

NAC members approving Harmel Report, 1967.

NATO

arrangements for reinforcement; standards and procedures for equipment, training, and logistics; joint and combined exercises; and interoperable infrastructure, armaments, and logistics. By adopting each of these critical elements, the NATO leadership effectively preserved the integrated military command beyond the Cold War.

The second issue in adapting IMC was determining how many and what types of forces allied nations should maintain. Most NATO forces are designed to defend their homelands, thus they take for granted private sector and local commercial support for contract services. European forces have three general shortfalls: lift, communications, and intelligence. The Strategic

Concept required a capability to quickly reach a trouble spot from anywhere in the NATO area, which meant improved power projection. If forces could be moved, fewer troops would be required overall and their stationing location, predominantly in western Germany, would matter less.

MC 400, the military implementation of the strategy, structured forces into three categories: reaction forces, intended to respond throughout the NATO area; main defense forces, which would constitute the bulk of European armies and are meant to be lower-readiness and in place; and augmentation forces, intended as a reserve. Tiering provided for a core of forces superior to those of the Cold War and cascaded down the capabilities of the rest. While the reaction forces comprised only 10 percent of the overall structure, they were considered sufficient to deter any limited attack and defend against short-warning strikes.

NATO also created multinational forces that demonstrated continuing commitment to common defense without the former threat, made national troop reductions more difficult, and justified the presence of American, British, and French troops in Germany after unification. The initial tranche consisted of two U.S.-German corps, a German-Dutch corps, and the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), containing forces from up to twelve nations. ARRC was critical because it was the only substantial ground force likely to be deployable throughout and beyond the NATO area in the short term.

The third issue in adapting IMC was revising NATO commands. Overall, the restructuring reduced headquarters strength by 25 percent (equal to the initial forces cut), built a reaction force command and supporting planning staffs, adjusted command boundaries to account for German unification, reduced the number of lower-level commands, and eliminated funds for national commands below the principal subordinate command level.

The final element of initial internal adaptation to the end of the Cold War was establishing resource primacy. Defense leaders had been concerned

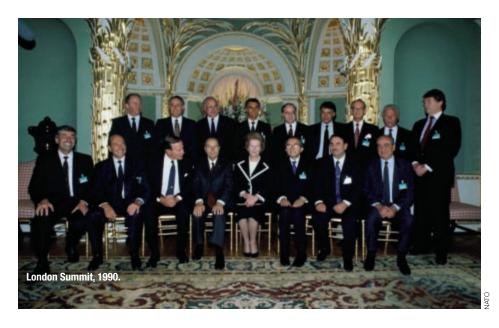Reforger Exercise, 1984.

SALT talks beginning in 1970.

that efforts to forge a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) would result in capabilities being siphoned from NATO requirements. In 1992 the Defense Planning Committee agreed that the primary responsibility of allied forces was to meet collective defense commitments.

Within two years NATO developed new missions, reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, restructured conventional forces to provide a peace dividend while improving the capability of the part of the force it might actually employ, built multinational forces to demonstrate solidarity and retain forces in Europe, streamlined commands, and established the first call on resources. By the end of 1992, the Alliance had agreements in place to maintain and even strengthen its role in European security. Translating them into full political acceptance would take another three years and the sad example of war in the former Yugoslavia.

External Adaptation

At the Rome Summit in 1991, NATO created new institutions to manage the engagement of former adversaries. The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) included all former Warsaw Pact states and became a forum for discussion and cooperation on defense issues. NACC formed parallel structures for routine consultations with allied defense, foreign policy, and military leaders. Enthusiasm by former Warsaw Pact states to be involved in NATO activities led to work plans for activities ranging from defense conversion and civilian control of the military to the development of joint peacekeeping doctrine. The council exposed its former adversaries to the political and military culture of cooperation and provided the first step towards Alliance expansion.

Although the council was an important innovation for including former Warsaw Pact states, it failed to meet the expectations of those nations which sought closer ties with NATO unhindered by Russia. By 1994 several of these states seemed fundamentally Western in character: they had democratic regimes, militaries subordinate to civilian control, market economies, and a willingness to participate in

London Summit, 1990.

common defense. NATO resisted calls for expanding membership with a formula devised by Secretary General Woerner that regarded expansion not as "a question of if but when." However, even with progress attained through NACC, the Alliance seemed to be running out of activities short of membership for prospective members.

the PFP program extended NACC cooperation to military exercises and operations

The question was how to achieve closer relationships with democratizing states in central Europe without antagonizing Moscow.

The United States developed an initiative to expand and marginally change NACC activities to encompass military-to-military contacts at lower levels, allowing nonmembers to move closer to the integrated military command and defense planning process. Substantively, the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program extended NACC cooperation to military exercises and operations and gave it institutional structure through a coordination cell at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) that could be linked to the NATO military structure. Closer military cooperation would create the basis for their eventual incorporation

into allied commands if membership was extended and into NATO-led operations regardless. It would also create a closer link in the meantime, even though partners were not being offered the defense guarantee. Moreover, NACC activities would be modified: nations could develop independent bilateral relationships with NATO. While marketed as a departure from previous policy, PFP actually was a continuation of the approach embodied in NACC and its work plans.

PFP more fully paralleled the internal functioning of the NATO defense planning process in order that new partners could understand the kinds of information exchange and evaluation which occur in allied defense channels. Framework documents signaled national intent while individual partnership programs outlined specific actions which partners and NATO would undertake, liaison officers were assigned to begin planning at SHAPE headquarters, and numerous cooperative topics were identified.

Military cooperation in PFP centered on peacekeeping, because the associated tasks are less operationally challenging than high-intensity combat and are of a sort that member and nonmember forces might come together to conduct. NATO then needed a way to

Inaugurating the Allied
Rapid Reaction Corps,
1992.

organize and command peace operations that did not threaten the primacy of its integrated military command.

SACEUR developed a proposal to link PFP activities to the military structure and provide more room for a separable-but-not-separate ESDI. The idea was to build individual command cells within existing NATO headquarters for planning and commanding combined and joint operations. Resulting combined joint task forces (CJTFs) could be pulled from the overall structure for non-NATO operations, either under WEU or another organization with Alliance support. Because they were indigenous to the integrated command, they would be assured support and would not compete with IMC for resources.

Both the PFP and CJTF initiatives were approved at the Brussels Summit in 1994. NATO leaders and nonmember nations eager to be included in allied operations quickly made PFP a

going concern, with its first military exercise in the fall of 1994. CJTFs were more difficult to get off the ground, in part because of technical reasons and in part because allied political leaders did not fully embrace the concept until details of its application to ESDI were worked out at the North Atlantic Council meeting held in Berlin during June 1996.

The Former Yugoslavia

Involvement in the former Yugoslavia necessitated further internal adaptation since NATO practices (consultations, initiating military planning, identifying suitable available national forces, approving operational plans, transitioning forces from national to allied command, and conducting operations) were all formally keyed to an Article 5 threat.

Member nations did not even share a common opinion of peacekeeping. Several militaries had substantial background in monitoring existing peace agreements as part of U.N. forces, others had constabulary experience in working closely with civilian authority to enforce colonial will, and the United States viewed such operations as low intensity conflict. As a result, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council had an agreed peacekeeping doctrine more than four years before NATO itself could agree on the military parameters of peace operations. The military command had to settle for identifying useful assets.

As it considered deploying allied troops to Bosnia, initially to monitor U.N. sanctions and the no-fly zone and subsequently to enforce the Dayton Accords, NATO had to develop the ability to authorize, oversee, and employ combat forces outside its area. It

alone could collect and analyze the intelligence to assess violations of U.N. resolutions, mount multinational maritime and tactical air operations to respond, and provide close air support for U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR). These were the first out-of-area operations and occasioned the first participation of French forces in the NATO command structure since 1966.

The Alliance needed to resolve two internal issues prior to its involvement in the Balkans: determine the role of SACEUR and establish the appropriate political level of operational oversight. While a debate over the role of the commander might seem arcane, it is crucial to understanding NATO. The French accepted the position outlined in Article 5 operations but did not believe these responsibilities should extend out-of-area. They argued that the subordinate operational commands were the proper echelon for organizing out-of-area operations, which would likely be smaller and involve more limited tasks than defending NATO territory.

For most allies in IMC, SACEUR is the glue that maintains the credibility of allied military operations. He runs NATO planning and the evaluation of force capabilities, translates military requirements into policy terms, and negotiates such terms with contributors to ensure adequate assets for a mission. He shields subordinate commanders from political pressure, allowing them to focus on operational requirements. That role within NATO is in some ways comparable to the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Without such a supreme commander, many allies would lose confidence in the Alliance's ability to organize and conduct operations. Members including the United States believe that national contributions can only be melded into a multinational force, inhibiting nations from pursuing divergent policies, under the leadership of SACEUR.

The other issue raised by out-of-area missions was the extent of political control exercised over operations. Some allies argued that the Alliance structure was too dominated by the military and inadequately controlled by political authorities. Though allied

Ukraine signing PFP framework documents, 1994.

practices may be appropriate for decisionmaking when NATO must defend itself against a large-scale, short-warning threat, some felt that they were not appropriate to the sensitive out-of-area peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

Ultimately both issues were resolved. France accepted the legitimacy of the integrated military command to conduct out-of-area operations on the same military terms as Article 5 simply because there was no other way to get the job done. In return, it received four key concessions: acknowledgement that NATO needed to develop new political practices for operating out-of-area; establishment of an ad hoc political military coordinating group consisting of political representatives from troop-contributing nations to review plans for out-of-area operations; the right of the North Atlantic Council to approve all military plans and operations; and representation in senior command positions when France committed troops to individual operations.

With this agreement NATO proceeded to plan for major ground involvement in the former Yugoslavia. In late 1994, the Serbs and Bosnian Serbs

appeared set to achieve their war aims even with UNPROFOR on the ground and before terms for a NATO operation could be reached. But several factors converged in 1995 to prevent the Serbs from consolidating their gains in Bosnia and Croatia: clandestine arming of the Bosnian army, collusion between the Croat and Bosnian forces, an effective offensive by those forces to roll back Bosnian Serb gains and "simplify" the negotiating map, sanctions against Serbia leading Belgrade to constrain the Bosnian Serbs, and international outrage over tactics employed by Bosnian Serbs in the spring offensives of 1995.

The United States led efforts to negotiate a cease fire consistent with territory held by each party to the conflict in Bosnia. Dayton produced a detailed schedule for demobilization, confidence building, and civilian reconstruction and re-enfranchisement, much of which was placed under the authority of the United Nations and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (formerly CSCE). NATO agreed to take over UNPROFOR functions and its 60,000 troops, disbanding elements not folded into the allied operation. While a sustainable peace in Bosnia is still by no means assured, the Implementation Force (IFOR) and subsequently the smaller Stabilization

Force (SFOR) created an environment in which the real work of rebuilding Bosnia through fostering a civil society can begin.

NATO demonstrated many strengths in Bosnia: the resilience of its political institutions in developing practices for non-Article 5 operations; the value of an integrated military structure to plan, organize, and command a multinational force; the flexibility of commands to incorporate the forces of nations outside IMC, including 16 non-members; and the practicality of PFP and CJTF initiatives in bringing an effective European force into being.

A European Identity

European allies have consistently pressed for a broader role in their own security since the end of the Cold War. Virtually every allied document published since 1990 refers to the benefits of a stronger ESDI. To enhance the

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role of Europeans the Alliance is reducing U.S. representation in its commands, making its assets available through combined joint task forces, increasing support for WEU or EU to act as the institutional basis for ESDI, holding joint NATO–WEU meetings, and using allied staffs to review WEU contingency plans.

The stark differences between U.S. and European power projection capabilities generates an intractable problem for developing ESDI: Europe lacks the assets to be truly independent of the United States. And while some European leaders believed that high-end military capabilities were no longer required in the post-Cold War era, the Chairman of the Military Committee, Field Marshal Vincent, noted "We learned the hard lesson from NATO's increasing involvement in Bosnia that a surprisingly wide range of very advanced military capabilities were eventually needed." In 1996, the allies agreed that in return for a NATO right

of first refusal over missions and committing to improve their forces, European allies could rely on NATO and the United States to supply assets needed for European operations. But even the Berlin agreement has not settled the ESDI debate. European allies continue to search for ways to better coordinate defense programs and institutional structures to build a stronger profile on defense issues.

NATO Expansion

The final major adaptation since the Cold War has been extending NATO membership to nations of the former Warsaw Pact. The process began shortly after the establishment of the PFP program. Both Bonn and Washington believed that the new democracies of central Europe risked setbacks unless the West validated the sacrifices which they had made to transform their societies and economies. They also came to believe by 1995 that the process could be managed without any damage to relations with Moscow provided the process was carried out slowly and transparently and was timed to follow the 1996 Russian presidential elections.

Determining which states would be invited to join began in 1995 with a study of the terms which new members should meet to ensure that they would be contributors to the common defense rather than just consumers of the security guarantee. The study stipulated that new members must meet both political and military criteria, the most important of which were to (1) resolve ethnic and extraterritorial disputes by peaceful means, (2) establish civilian control of the military, (3) share roles and risks of a common defense, (4) subscribe to the Alliance strategy, and (5) work toward interoperability of forces with other members. The terms ensured that all new members shared the political values of the Alliance and would eventually make a contribution to its defense capabilities.

As relations with the first group of candidates—namely, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—intensified, the Alliance institutionalized its relationship with Russia through the

NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. That council does not provide Russia with a veto over NATO action, but it does acknowledge its importance in the European security landscape and provide for joint action when there is consensus.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were admitted in March 1999. Although NATO seems committed to an open door policy, no new candidates are expected in the near term. Russia is not enthusiastic about expansion but appears to have accepted it without a major rift in its relations with the Alliance.

Managing relations with Russia while expanding both membership and responsibilities will be the predominant challenge to NATO. The Alliance will also continue to deal with internal disagreements over how to address security concerns that arise in Europe and beyond. However, such challenges by no means diminish the incredible achievements during and after the Cold War. The Alliance has succeeded in redirecting its efforts and its institutions from a large-scale, short-warning attack from the East toward new and diverse security threats. In only ten years it has built consensus on new missions, adapted its political and military processes and structures to shed the vestiges of the Cold War, contributed to a durable peace in the Balkans, and built institutional relationships with other organizations and major outside nations. It is a record the Alliance can be proud of and that would both surprise and please its founders.   **JFQ**